

Newsletter

Colorado River Management Plan

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Grand Canyon National Park



June 2002

To the Many People Interested in the Grand Canyon:

We are pleased to announce that Grand Canyon National Park has initiated a new process to update the 1989 Colorado River Management Plan (CRMP). Under the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the National Park Service (NPS) will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Colorado River Management Plan. The EIS will: 1) provide a comprehensive look at the impacts to our natural and cultural resources from current visitor uses on the Colorado River; and then 2) evaluate various alternatives that can help us maintain and enhance this treasured resource while providing a quality visitor experience.

In February of this year the NPS, along with conservation organizations and the outfitters' association, reached settlement on a lawsuit filed in July 2000. The lawsuit involved the management of the river and backcountry areas of the park. The settlement commits the NPS to revise the CRMP by December 31, 2004.

Addressing the many long-standing Colorado River management issues will be a challenge, especially within this established timeframe. However, with your help we will meet that challenge, using a constructive and meaningful public outreach process. Once the CRMP has been completed, the NPS will restart its process to review and revise the park's 1988 Backcountry Management Plan.

Many of you were involved in the process we started in 1997 to revise the CRMP. This enormous effort generated many sincere and well thought-out comments that our staff collected and analyzed. A summary of public comments was compiled and distributed in April 1998, and this input will provide the foundation for our efforts as we reinstate the planning process. A copy of this document, as well as other information on the process to revise the CRMP, is available on our website, at www.nps.gov/grca/crmp.

Your input is very important to us, and in this newsletter you will find some background information as well as a number of ways in which you can be involved. We encourage you to take advantage of these opportunities, and pass the information on to other people who might be interested.

We invite your active participation in this process, and look forward to hearing from you. We will be communicating electronically in the future, stay informed by submitting your email address to grca_crmp@nps.gov

Sincerely,

Joseph F. Alston
Superintendent

Contents:

- The future of the Colorado River
- Issues to be addressed in future plans or processes
- Planning process and schedule
- How you can be involved



sound • ing n.

an environmental probe

an act of measuring the depth of a body of water

[often pl.] an exploratory sampling, as of public opinions.

THE FUTURE OF THE COLORADO RIVER

The foundation for managing the Colorado River is based on the federal laws that first established Grand Canyon National Park and the National Park Service (NPS). The park's *General Management Plan*, which was developed through an extensive public process, stated it well when it outlined the River's significance and vision for its management.

Significance:

The Colorado River, as it flows through the park, provides opportunities for one of the world's premier river experiences, including one of the longest stretches of navigable white water on earth.

Vision:

Visitors traveling through the canyon on the Colorado River should have the opportunity for a variety of personal outdoor experiences, ranging from solitary to social. Visitors should be able to continue to experience the river corridor with as little influence from the modern world as possible. The river experience should help visitors to intimately relate to the majesty of the canyon.

Past Colorado River Management Plan (CRMP) discussions were filled with innovative ideas about how to "fix" various aspects of managing the river's use. These suggestions have been retained for this planning effort and will clearly be considered.

However, as the NPS reinitiates its process to update the 1989 CRMP, we believe the best place to start is to reaffirm with the public the conditions and qualities for which we are planning.

We will not start with how to fix problems, but rather ask a more fundamental question: **What would we choose to have the river be like in the future?**

Will natural and cultural resources be in the same condition they are in today or will they be different in the future? What is a future river trip like in the winter, spring, or fall as opposed to the summer? Are there different visitor experiences and activities at these times of the year? In the future, will the river and its surrounding environment still be capable of offering the same types of experiences that it has for so many people in the past?

Once we discuss this question and outline the various issues involved we can move back into the boat, and get ready to launch (again)...

We will start by including the input collected from the 1997 CRMP process. This process included well-attended public workshops in three cities and an extensive written comment period. That input is outlined in the report, *Summary of Public Comment from the 1997 Colorado River Management Plan Scoping Process, April 1998*, and is available on the Internet at www.nps.gov/grca/crmp. You may find this information helpful as you begin to prepare your own comments.

During this new process, the NPS will develop and evaluate alternatives to address resource protection issues, potential resource impacts, user capacities, as well as possible mitigation measures to avoid or minimize impacts to natural and cultural resources. The NPS will review some key resource issues outside of the park's boundaries that affect the integrity of the Colorado River and will consider alternatives that include "no-action" or the status quo, no motorized river use, and varying levels of motorized and non-motorized use. Issues to be addressed include, but are not limited to:

- Appropriate levels of visitor use consistent with natural and cultural resource protection and preservation mandates
- Allocation of use between commercial and non-commercial groups
- The non-commercial permitting system
- The level of motorized and non-motorized raft use
- The range of services provided to the public
- The continued use of helicopters to transport river passengers near Whitmore Wash (in consultation with the Hualapai Indian Tribe and appropriate parties)



ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED IN FUTURE PLANS OR PROCESSES

We understand there are many issues related to Grand Canyon National Park, and we want to hear your concerns and opinions about these issues. However, the scope of this particular EIS concentrates on visitor use issues and the associated impacts to natural and cultural resources, and we must maintain that focus to achieve our required timeframes. The following issues, while influential and related to the CRMP, are considered to be outside the scope of this EIS. These are being addressed or will be addressed through alternate plans or processes.

- **Glen Canyon Dam operations**

The CRMP/EIS is expected to reveal relationships between recreation goals and dam operations that may have implications for dam releases. We would submit any recommendations about dam operations to the Adaptive Management Workgroup for their consideration.

- **Commercial Overflights**

The CRMP/EIS will not propose changes to aircraft routes over the river corridor. This will be addressed in a separate planning effort. Our plan will define resource conditions and desired visitor experiences along the river corridor, and where noise impacts are stated, that input can be forwarded to the subsequent planning effort. This CRMP/EIS will address the Whitmore Wash Helicopter-landing issue (in cooperation with the Hualapai Tribe) because it directly affects the river.

- **Wild and Scenic River Designation**

Although there is some overlap between the scope of a wild and scenic river study and this CRMP/EIS, there are many key issues within the Plan that are well outside the scope of a wild and scenic river study. Therefore, the EIS will not directly focus on the designation issue. The CRMP/EIS will provide information and management direction that can contribute to a future wild and scenic river suitability study.

- **Wilderness Designation**

Decisions made through the CRMP/EIS may influence future wilderness status for the Colorado River, however this process does not presume reconsideration of the wilderness proposal for the entire park. This EIS will evaluate a reasonable range of alternatives, including a “no motors” alternative.

- **Backcountry Operations**

This EIS will not evaluate alternatives for resource protection or visitor use alternatives for the entire Grand Canyon backcountry. Management of the backcountry wilderness will be addressed in a separate process to be initiated in 2005.

- **Allocation of Administrative Use**

The NPS will continue to permit administrative activities (i.e. research) based on resource protection, visitor safety and science needs. The amount and level of administrative use will be included when evaluating the human use impact to resource conditions.



PARK VISITORS SITTING BY THE EDGE OF
THE COLORADO RIVER, CIRCA 1908

There are three ways to submit this form:

1. mail the form to CRMP Team, Grand Canyon National Park, P.O. Box 129, Grand Canyon, AZ 86023
2. visit www.nps.gov/grca/crmp and fill out the form electronically
3. send an email to grca_crmp@nps.gov with comments to the questions below

We anticipate receiving a large number of responses. Responding to these questions in the suggested format will allow us to better review and categorize your thoughts and comments.

Name: _____ Email: _____

Mailing Address: _____

I. What are the conditions and qualities that make a Colorado River trip special to you? Imagine yourself visiting the Grand Canyon in 20 years. Describe what you would like to see and experience on a river trip.

2. List your top 3 priority issues for the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon.

I.

2.

3.

3. Additional comments – also list anyone else you think should be placed on the mailing list for future updates.

Our practice is to make comments, including names and home addresses of respondents, available for public review during regular business hours. Individual respondents may request that we withhold their home address from the record, which we will honor to the extent allowable by law. There also may be circumstances in which we would withhold from the record a respondent's identity, as allowable by law. If you wish us to withhold your name and/or address, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment. We will make all submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, available for public inspection in their entirety.

PLANNING PROCESS AND SCHEDULE

There are typically three broad phases to producing a plan like this, with each phase consisting of various steps. During Phase One the planning team sets goals, identifies issues, and collects data related to these issues. Efforts during Phase Two focus on defining alternative means for achieving goals and resolving issues. Phase Three consists of identifying a preferred alternative. [* indicates key public involvement steps]

Phase One:

- Assemble planning team and begin to identify the project's scope and issues, analyze data and relevant information, and customize the planning process. (Spring 2002)
- Begin consultation with American Indian tribes, federal, and state agencies. (Summer 2002)
- Gather public input on future resource conditions and trip qualities, and issues through written comment, electronic outreach, and public workshops. (Summer 2002)*

Phase Two:

- Analyze public input. Identify impact topics and evaluation criteria; conduct analysis of possible effects. (Fall – Winter 2002)
- Propose and assess a range of reasonable alternatives for future management of the Colorado River. Based on this assessment and public comment, the team defines a preferred alternative. (Winter 2003)
- Prepare document: Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). (Spring – Summer 2003)
- Public review of DEIS. Conduct public meetings and gather written comment. Continue consultation with tribes and agencies. (Summer – Fall 2003).*

Phase Three:

- Analyze public comment on DEIS; re-evaluate alternatives. Preferred alternative is identified. (Winter 2003 – Fall 2004)
- Prepare final document and issue Record of Decision for the Colorado River Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement. (Winter 2004)

"PAINTED CANYON" ENGRAVING FOR THE
IVES EXPEDITION REPORT, PUBLISHED 1861



How YOU CAN BE INVOLVED:

1 WRITE

Please use the form on page 4 to describe your vision for future management – including resource conditions, visitor experiences and recreational opportunities. Also, please list what issues you feel are most important, and who else should be added to our electronic mailing list. Submit written input and comment by September 20, 2002. **editor note: the date has been extended to November 1, 2002.**

2 ATTEND Public Scoping Workshops

A series of public scoping workshops will be held this August in Flagstaff, Phoenix, Salt Lake City, Las Vegas, and Denver. Dates and locations have not yet been confirmed, once finalized details will be posted at www.nps.gov/grca/crmp

3 STAY INFORMED - visit www.nps.gov/grca/crmp

- Receive updates and information electronically. Submit your email address to grca_crmp@nps.gov or contact us at the return address on this newsletter.
- Specific questions should be directed to: Linda Jalbert at 928-638-7909.

Our goal is to post all future information and documents on our website, www.nps.gov/grca/crmp, and send notice via email when new information is posted. Paper copies will only be sent to those individuals who notify us they require them.



National Park Service
US Department of the Interior

CRMP Team
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Penalty for Private Use, \$300